

BOOK REVIEWS

Treponematoses. A World Problem. By T. Guthe and R. R. Willcox. 1954. Reprint of a Special Number of the *Chronicle of the World Health Organization*, vol. 8, pp. 37-114.

At a time when the incidence of venereal disease and consequently interest in these diseases has declined in many countries, this special issue of the *Chron. Wld Hlth Org.* is of particular value. It consists basically of a summary of the past, present, and projected activities of the Venereal Disease and Treponematoses Section of the World Health Organization. It does not set out to be a complete catalogue of national and international efforts in combating the treponemal diseases, but its attempt to assess the current world situation in this field provides both comprehensive and arresting information.

With its world-wide interest in public health affairs, the W.H.O. has, in the treponematoses, a problem admirably suited to its basic function. The recognition that venereal syphilis, yaws, bejel, pinta, and other treponemal diseases of exotic name and distribution are merely variations on the same theme is a fundamental concept on which the whole approach to the problem is based. Difficulties with regard to primitive mentality and primitive living conditions in under-developed communities and the technical difficulties of mass serological screening, examination, and treatment appear to have been overcome with considerable success.

A brief introduction outlining the epidemiological history of the treponematoses is followed by a concise evaluation of the world situation with regard to venereal syphilis, yaws, pinta, and endemic syphilis in its various guises. The integration of figures supplied by countries where records are available and reports from various W.H.O. teams in other countries produce some startling results. The suggestion that "throughout the world at least 20 million cases [of venereal syphilis] exist" must jolt from their complacency those who consider that the disease has now reached a level whereby it is no longer of great significance. Such a potential reservoir of infection cannot afford to be ignored in a world which is becoming smaller every day, and it serves to underline the continued need for intensive public health measures even in

those countries where syphilis in its infectious state seems to have become something of a rarity.

Because of the peculiar difficulties in the control of these diseases in primitive communities, W.H.O. has evolved the mass treatment campaign, the basic principles of which are described fully. That these campaigns are possible and relatively inexpensive to conduct seems to be an established fact, and the classical example must remain that carried out in Bosnia in 1948-52. The importance of follow-up by the authorities is stressed, and it remains to be seen whether the initial reports of success will represent a permanent victory.

Other no less important activities of this section of W.H.O. are described generally: demonstration centres in various countries and the results of their work; international exchange of technical information; standardization of serological testing; consultant aid for countries with special problems; W.H.O. fellowship and professional training activities.

This issue of the *Chronicle of the W.H.O.* is essentially a review, and as such the subject matter is condensed and concentrated, the various sources of information being listed in a selective bibliography of W.H.O. publications. If it does nothing more than stimulate interest in these publications it will serve a useful purpose, but its greatest value lies in directing attention to the world-wide prevalence of the treponemal diseases and to the vast amount of work yet to be done in this field. L. W.

Die Mund- und Rachenkrankheiten. Klinik und Therapie. Ein Leitfaden für Ärzte und Studierende. By C. R. Griebel. 1953. Pp. 140, 42 illus. Georg Thieme Verlag, Stuttgart. (DM. 29; 50s.)

The sub-title of this book indicates that it is intended to be a guide for physicians and students, and as such it certainly serves its purpose.

An introductory chapter on anatomy, physiology, and methods of investigation is followed by a concise but thorough description of pathological manifestations in the mouth and throat, and their diagnostic significance. The photographs and coloured pictures are excellent, the therapy not quite up to date. The venereologist may find it a useful book. D. G.